

EXTENSION OF MORNING
BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 2 o'clock today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUE OF
VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I just want to give the Presiding Officer a little bit of an update on where things are regarding negotiations on the Schumer-Wyden-Bond issue involving the question of voter identification.

Staffs are meeting. There has been no resolution, I am sad to report, at this juncture, but they are meeting and are working on this.

I thank Senator SCHUMER and Senator WYDEN and their staffs, along with Senator BOND and his staff, to see if they can come forward with a compromise proposal. As I mentioned two or three times already today, I hoped that would have happened before we got to the vote today. I made a pitch and appeal on numerous occasions, but there was not much of an appetite for a compromise until now.

My hope is we can come to this sooner rather than later. I apologize to my colleagues. I apologize to Senator DASCHLE, who has been absolutely stellar in all of this. I am sure he is going to remind me for years to come, when he asked me how long this bill might take, I said I thought we could do it in a day. I suspect I will hear that story over and over again for many years to come.

We have been on it 2 days. We were on it for 2 days when we were not in session, a Friday and a Monday. We did get some work done then. On the Thursday of the week before recess, we were here, and yesterday, now today, so at least 2½ days.

My hope is that by later this afternoon, sooner rather than later, we can report a compromise proposal, then the rest of the amendments we can deal with fairly quickly. There will be votes on some. I don't anticipate that any one of them, regardless of the outcome, would provoke the kind of situation we are in at this particular juncture.

Hope springs eternal, even in February. I am hopeful that before the afternoon is out, we can make a favorable report to the Chair and to our colleagues that the election reform bill is prepared to move forward and get to final passage.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STEEL

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, today I come to the Senate Chamber to stand up for steel. There is a crisis in America's steel industry. The next few weeks will determine the fate and future of that industry and, I believe, the fate and future of our steelworkers today and our retired steelworkers.

I commend President Bush for initiating the section 201 investigation on steel. That means an investigation by the International Trade Commission on whether or not we are facing unfair dumping. I am now calling on the President to impose an effective remedy; that is, a remedy of 40-percent tariffs across the board on steel.

Since 1997, 31 steel companies have gone bankrupt, putting at risk over 62,000 jobs. Why is this? It is exactly what the International Trade Commission found: Subsidized foreign steel companies dump their excess products on the United States market at below market prices. They come into the United States and flood us with their imports at fire sale prices.

In response to this unprecedented crisis, President Bush did take an important step of initiating an investigation under section 201 of the trade act. The ITC unanimously found that these imports have caused serious harm to the American steel industry. Now the President has to act before tens of thousands more jobs are lost and retirees face the threat to their pensions and their health care. He must take meaningful action, not just some half measure that doesn't meet the challenge of the crisis.

Steel is in crisis. Last year, 17 steel companies filed for bankruptcy protection, 14 steel mills shut down, and nearly 30,000 workers lost their jobs.

Why does steel matter? This is not nostalgia for our industrial past. This is about our national and our economic security.

If we are worried about dependence on foreign oil, we should certainly be worried about dependence on foreign steel. We need steel to build America, whether it is our bridges or our automobiles, and also for our national security. In my own home State of Maryland, Bethlehem Steel made the steel plate to repair the U.S.S. *Cole*. It is American steel that is building Navy ships, Navy subs, American planes, the kind of steel we need for those bunker-buster bombs we need.

Are we going to rely upon Russia, China, and other countries and be steel dependent? I don't think we should do that.

What about our steelworkers and our steelworker retirees? There are over 300,000 people currently working as steel and iron workers. There are now over 700,000 retirees and surviving spouses. All told, there are more than 1 million Americans, both retired and on the job now, who depend on steel for their livelihood, their pension, and their health care.

What caused this crisis? Is it because American steel was inefficient, because the unions wouldn't cooperate with management, because we didn't use new technologies or new processes? Absolutely not. The reason American steel is in such dire straits is unfair trade. Foreign steel companies, subsidized by their government, dump excess steel in our market at those fire sale prices.

The United States of America does not have excess capacity. The United States and Canada have been net importers of steel. If you want to look at examples of these subsidies, let me give you one: Russia. This comes from the Bloomberg Business Report. This does not come from BARB MIKULSKI. The Bloomberg Report last week talked about how the Russian Government keeps 1,000 unprofitable steel plants open through Russian subsidies. That is not 1,000 workers; that is 1,000 steel plants. Because of those subsidies, they are able to stay in operation.

How can we compete with Russian subsidies where they have comrade health care, all their health care is paid for, they get subsidies in steel, and at the same time we are expected to compete?

What is the solution? We need a level playing field by reducing excess steel capacity abroad.

The way we also send them a message to stop the dumping is by imposing a 40-percent tariff. That would level the playing field. Half measures will not do. We need that 40-percent tariff and we need it without exception. The effects will last much longer than the 3 or 4 years because America's steel industry will have a chance to get back on its feet.

America's steel industry is the best in the world and I can't emphasize how competitive we are. It is the most efficient, uses the fewest man-hours available per ton, thanks to our steelworkers making the best use of technology and a willingness to cooperate with management. It is also the most environmentally sound, producing less emissions on steel produced.

Do you think those 1,000 Russian steel mills are going to be environmentally sensitive and OSHA compliant? I don't think so. American steel companies have invested over \$20 billion in new technology to achieve these efficiencies. American steelworkers have made painful concessions in wages and benefits so that the industry would be efficient and competitive and would have a future.

Madam President, the President must act now. The next few weeks will